

CLAIMS:

1. A sling assembly, comprising:
  - a surgical sling configured to be implanted during a surgical sling procedure, and including first and second regions and a central portion;
  - a removable sheath assembly situated about the surgical sling, the removable sheath assembly comprising,
    - first and second upper sheaths, the first upper sheath configured to be situated about the first region of the surgical sling, and the second upper sheath configured to be situated about the second region of the surgical sling, and
    - a lower sheath, the lower sheath configured to be situated about the central portion of the surgical sling and to be in cooperative association with both the first and second upper sheaths.
2. The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the lower sheath defines an interior portion that envelopes the central portion of the surgical sling and an exterior portion which has first and second faces, the first face configured to be placed adjacent to a patient's urethra, and the first face includes a kiss cut.
3. The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the lower sheath defines an interior portion that envelopes the surgical sling and an exterior portion which has first and second faces, the first face configured to be placed adjacent to a patient's urethra, and the first face includes a score placed longitudinally along its length.
4. The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the lower sheath defines an interior portion that envelopes the surgical sling and an exterior portion which has first and second faces, the first face configured to be placed adjacent to a patient's urethra, and the second face has a tab portion operatively associated therewith to assist in removal of the lower sheath from the mesh.
5. The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the lower sheath defines an interior portion that envelopes the surgical sling and an exterior portion which has first and second faces, the first face configured to be placed adjacent to a patient's urethra, and the sling assembly further comprises a removal assembly operatively associated with the lower sheath to assist in separating the lower sheath from the sling.
6. The sling assembly of claim 5, wherein the removal assembly includes a tube situated within the lower sheath and a suture which operatively associates the tube and a tab portion.

7. The sling assembly of claim 1, further comprising a dilator for assisting in asserting the sling assembly.

8. The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the first and second upper sheaths each have an end proximate the lower sheath, and the ends of the first and second upper sheaths proximate the lower sheath cooperatively associate with the lower sheath by being placed in a telescoping relationship with the lower sheath producing first and second overlapping portions so that the central portion of the sling is free of any overlapping sheath portions.

9. The sling assembly of claim 8, wherein the proximate end of the first and second upper sheaths are situated on the outside of the lower sheath.

10. The sling assembly of claim 5, wherein the removal assembly is situated so that the first upper sheath can be used on either the left or right side of the patient.

11. The sling assembly of claim 1, further comprising a spacer configured to be placed between the surgical sling and the patient's urethra.

12. The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the sling is elastic.

13. A method for implanting a sling to treat urinary incontinence in a patient comprising the steps of:

providing a sling assembly including,

a surgical sling including first and second regions and a central portion, and

a removable sheath assembly including first and second upper sheaths and a lower sheath;

creating at least one vaginal incision;

creating at least one suprapubic incision;

positioning the sling assembly such that the central portion of the surgical sling and the lower sheath are placed underneath the patient's urethra;

removing the lower sheath via the at least one vaginal incision; and

removing the first and second upper sheaths via the at least one suprapubic incision.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the lower sheath includes a removal assembly and the step of removing the lower sheath includes the step of:

pulling the removal assembly in order to remove the lower sheath from the mesh.

15. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of:

placing a spacer between the mesh and the patient's urethra after the step of removing the lower sheath.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein the step of removing the lower sheath occurs prior to the step of removing the first and second upper sheaths.

17. The method of claim 13, wherein the step of removing the first and second upper sheaths occurs prior to the step of removing the lower sheath.

18. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of:  
placing a spacer between the mesh and the patient's urethra prior to either removing step.

19. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of:  
removing the spacer from between the mesh and the patient's urethra;  
wherein the step of removing the first and second upper sheaths occurs prior to the step of removing the spacer and the step of removing the spacer occurs prior to removing the lower sheath.

20. A method for implanting a sling to treat urinary incontinence in a patient comprising the steps of:

providing a sling assembly including,  
    a surgical sling including first and second regions and a central portion,  
    a removable sheath assembly including first and second upper sheaths and a lower sheath, and  
    a spacer;  
creating at least one vaginal incision;  
creating at least one suprapubic incision;  
positioning the sling assembly such that the central portion of the surgical sling and the lower sheath are placed underneath the patient's urethra;  
removing the lower sheath via the at least one vaginal incision;  
removing the first and second upper sheaths via the at least one suprapubic incision;  
and  
removing the spacer.